

Public

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA OPTICAL FIBER ROLL-OUT
Project Number:	2018-0392
Country:	REGIONAL - AFRICA
Project Description:	The project concerns the deployment of fibre optics networks in regions of Eastern Africa where, either this kind of networks are not available, or they are expensive and unreliable. In both cases, the development of digital services enabled by broadband access is limited. In total, the networks deployed will have a total length of more than 4 850 km, including more than 3 850 km of terrestrial fibre cable and around 1 000 km of submarine cable in Lake Tanganyika and Lake Albert.
EIA required	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	no
(Details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")	

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The Promoter is an African SME in the process of developing the Environmental and Social capability for compliance with the Bank's requirements. As part of the loan conditions, the Bank will check their Environmental Policy and Environmental Management Plan that will be prepared by an experienced consultant hired by the Promoter.

The project can be divided into two distinct parts in terms of potential environmental impact: terrestrial cable deployment and submarine cable deployment.

Two thirds of the terrestrial cable deployment will be performed using existing utility poles, usually located along roads, and therefore this part of the project is not expected to result in any relevant impact. The rest of the terrestrial cable deployment will be underground and will require opening trenches for cable laying, in most cases in the road reserve.

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100 000 tons CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20 000 tons CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

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There are no relevant air or water emissions or pollution during the fibre construction activities. All land is reinstated to its original state. The promoter will also make sure that all construction debris like duct pieces, warning tape pieces and cement bags are removed from site. Therefore, potential impacts are also limited and will be mitigated by application of best practices in design and installation. In conclusion, together with the mitigation measures, the environmental impact of the terrestrial cable deployment part of the project is expected to be minor. However, a recent amendment to Kenyan environmental legislation (Environmental Management and Coordination Act of 1999, amended in 2016) requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be presented as part of the permitting process for this type of projects. The presentation of the EIA approved by the corresponding authority (NEMA or National Environmental Management Authority) will be a condition for the disbursements related to the concerned cable segment. It is still unclear at this stage of the project whether environmental authorities in other countries (Rwanda, Uganda, Eastern DRC and Zambia) will also require EIAs to provide the licenses to deploy the fibre cable. The analysis of the applicable legislation and the presentation of the corresponding EIAs approved by the relevant authorities, if it was confirmed that they were required, will be a condition for the disbursements related to the concerned cable segments.

With respect to the submarine cable parts of the project, potential environmental impacts are mainly related to the landings of the cable on the shores of the lake and the connection and construction of the landing stations. The final project design is still under preparation, but the promoter plans to avoid any ecological sensitive areas, as well as large ship anchoring and trawling fishing areas for the cable's protection. Although at this stage of the project it is not clear yet whether the authorities require an EIA for providing the permits to deploy the cable and build the landing stations, the EIB has requested the promoter to prepare EIAs for these segments of the cable. The presentation of the final project design as well as the EIAs approved by all the relevant authorities (if required by those authorities) will be a condition for the disbursements related to the concerned submarine cable segments.

Social Assessment

The promoter outsources most of labour-intensive activities on the field to external contractors. In their contracts, there is a requirement for the contractors to be compliant with the national labour laws and applicable laws on occupational health and safety, as well as the promoter's policies on these matters. All contractors are required to take insurance for their employees/workers and provide proof of this. Pole climbers are accredited climbers and are always equipped with all necessary personal protective gear. The utility companies that own the poles perform regular audits to verify compliance with these requirements. Every morning before commencement of work, a safety meeting is held for all crewmembers.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

As mentioned, the cable construction works have a low potential impact and do not take long, as the typical speed of deployment is around 4 km per day. Nevertheless, before the construction of a particular segment of the cable, the promoter's contractor informs all concerned authorities in the area of its proposed works. The local communities are also informed and educated about the intended works of the company, and the promoter negotiates compensations for landowners and other people affected by the construction. In most cases, this process is not mandatory, as the promoter has previously obtained all the necessary permits from the road authority for the construction works in the road reserve.

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However, the promoter considers essential for the success of the implementation and operation of the project to gain the support of the local communities. Other positive impacts on the local communities are the hiring of local people for the civil works and business opportunities for local women who typically supply food for the construction crew and project managers on site.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The promoter is an African SME that will develop its E&S capabilities in compliance with EIB standards, with the help of an experienced consultant.

If the project were located in the EU, it would not require an Environmental Impact Assessment as telecommunication projects do not fall under Annex I or II of the Directive 2014/52/EU amending the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU. The impact of the cable construction activities included in the project are not expected to be relevant and will be mitigated by application of best practices in design and installation. However, the environmental management authorities in Kenya and possibly in other countries covered by the fibre roll-out do require an EIA for the approval of this type of projects. The promoter will also prepare an EIA for the submarine cable parts of the project. The presentation of these EIAs approved by all the relevant authorities as well as the final design of the submarine cable parts of the project will be a condition for the disbursements related to the corresponding segments of the cable.

The project, provided that the proposed disbursement conditions and undertakings will be complied with by the promoter, will be in Environmental and Social terms, acceptable for EIB funding.

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